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Refugee Policies and the Interactions of the United Nations and European Union

By

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- Introduction -

When the United Nations (UN) was created in 1945, part of its job was to regain world order after the disarray World War II left the planet in. One of the critical issues that came out of this conflict was the number of displaced people and refugees in Europe. The UN created the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which was established in 1950 “with a three-year mandate to complete its work and then disband” (“History of UNHCR”). Not even one year later the UN decided to keep the UNHCR and established the Status of Refugees. The UNHCR was established for Europe, but since then the EU hadn’t needed the UNHCR the institution has focused on helping refugees in other parts of the world. Since the formation of the European Union (EU) in 1993, the relationship between the UNHCR and the European countries has had to change with regard to treatment of refugees. The Arab Spring in 2011 and the Syria crisis shortly after were some of the worst refugee crises to directly impact countries of the EU since WWII. It is extremely important to note how the United Nations has dealt with these humanitarian crises while interacting with international organizations like the European Union. Policies for refugees are vital to have in place for the future as Europe directly deals with its own refugee crisis.

So how does the United Nations interact with regional and international organizations with regards to policies for refugees; specifically with and within the European Union? My hypothesis is that the European Union affects the United Nations’ policy changes with regards to refugees. Since the European Union is made up of many powerful and wealthy first-world countries, they have

more power to push their own agenda when it comes to refugee protocols. The refugee crises caused by the Arab Spring and civil war in Syria has motivated the EU countries to begin implementing refugee policy changes now that they are the ones being directly affected by the issue. Therefore the EU has more power than other international organizations within the United Nations and is going to keep using that power to their benefit. This thesis is grounded on research of the UN and EU documents and secondary sources.

Refugees are an extremely complex topic and, as of late, at the forefront of media coverage as it is starting to negatively affect powerful European countries. The UNHCR has to remind the world that “refugees are among the most vulnerable people in the world” because they have no home and no one to represent their interests while they flee their own country. People become refugees when their own state, which is responsible for protecting them, is unable to protect their fundamental human rights. In the UNHCR’s 1951 Convention it was noted, “individuals may suffer such serious violations of their human rights that they have to leave their homes, their families, and their communities to find sanctuary in another country.” When states can’t secure the safety of their citizens, it then falls to the international community to protect them until they have a home.

#### - History of Refugees -

The issue of refugees has only become a priority in the last century. Previously there were mass migrations like the ones from “1846 to 1914, where over 30 million migrants left Europe for America” (Bundy 5) by the late 1800s to

early 1900s, countries started limiting how many people were entering, making moving from place to place harder and creating barriers for refugees. Shortly after the restriction of immigrants, World War I and the Russian Revolution in 1917 created an estimated five million refugees and Europe's first refugee crisis. Although efforts were made to combat the growing problem, progress was lost when World War II took center stage. The number of refugees went from five million from the previous wars to over 40 million refugees, homeless, and displaced citizens after WWII ended in 1945. As these refugees - mainly concentrated in Central and Eastern Europe - moved around, it was harder for them to find a home because states were trying to create "ethnically homogenous nation states" (Bundy 6) and the identities of these refugees often didn't align with what these new states wanted.

Immediately after WWII, the UN created the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) to reduce the mass of refugees and by 1951 they had gotten the number of refugee and displaced persons down to 177,000; the UNRRA got millions resettled, repatriated, and even got some emigrated. Once the enormous efforts of the UNRRA were over, the UNHCR took over as a more permanent effort and the Status of Refugees (which later turned into the 1967 Protocol) was created within the UN.

At the 1951 Convention that created the Status of Refugees, a definition of a refugee was created:

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside

the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (“Convention and Protocol” 14)

Before 1951 the UNHCR was only concerned about refugees in Europe before 1951 but “the 1967 Protocol expanded its scope as the problem of displacement spread around the world” (“The 1951 Convention” 1). With refugee status, people have the right to education, housing, work, freedom of religion, access to the courts, freedom of movement within the territory, travel documents, and many other basic rights (4). Refugees also won’t be punished for illegally entering into a state or to be expelled from one (“except under certain, strictly defined conditions”). The only way a person *cannot* get refugee status (if they already qualify for all the above requirements) is if the person of question is a war criminal or is guilty of any crime against the United Nations or the UN’s commitment for peace. Refugee status ends when a refugee is no longer in fear of their own state and can return, or if they naturalize in their new country. Simply put, refugees are people who came from an unstable state and are only looking for a place of safe refuge.

#### - The European Union -

After both World Wars, European states decided to come together to create peace and this came in the form of several organizations that evolved throughout the years to be the European Union (EU). Although the EU claims

that it was founded in 1950, it was officially formed with the Treaty on European Union, also called the Maastricht Treaty, in 1993. Its predecessor the EU was founded to create peace and economic stability between the borders of neighboring European countries but the foundation of the organization started after World War II with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950 and had only six founding members: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands (“History of the European Union”).

As the Cold War began, more European countries aligned and in 1957 created the European Economic Community (EEC), or the ‘Common Market.’ The 1960s fortified this idea of a common economic community with a period of economic growth from a new, younger generation. Finally in the 1970s Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined with the other European states. In the 80s, Greece, Spain and Portugal arrive and with new members, the group designed the ‘Single Market’ to start trading freely across European borders. With Austria, Finland, and Sweden joining in the mid-90s, the EU established the ‘Schengen’ agreement which allows people to travel within EU states without having their passports checked at borders, making traveling between the states easy and accessible. The borders became even more open with the start of a common currency (the Euro) and included additional countries. Today the EU has 28 Member States and continues to update their infrastructure communication and policies to increase efficiencies.

The EU consists of 28 Member States, which maintain their state sovereignty and simultaneously belong to one large organization with a common

goal of making decisions holistic to Europe.

These Member States democratically, voluntarily and collectively decide on policies and treaties. There are four main divisions within the EU (as can be seen from the figure on

the left): the European Parliament “which represents the EU’s citizens and is directly elected by them,” the European Council “which

consists of heads of State or Government of the EU Member States,” the Council, “which

represents the government of the EU member states” and the European Commission “which represents the interests of the EU as a whole”

(European Union 5). The European Council

makes the priorities and “general political

direction” of the EU but does not have legislative

functions while the European Commission is the



The structure of the European Union. Table from the [europa.eu](http://europa.eu).

one that creates new laws, which are adopted by the European Parliament and

Council, then the Member States and Commission implement them. To

summarize, the EU is organized “between the fully federal system found in the

United States and the loose, intergovernmental cooperation system seen in the

United Nations” (3).



Within these divisions there are many other institutions and bodies for specific issues, such as the refugee crises. Today much of the help needed to safely get refugees into the EU states comes from the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, which is a part of the European Commission division of the EU. Within the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, the main institution that has been helping refugees safely enter the EU has been the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, which was established in 2001 to “enable coordinated assistance from the participating states to victims of natural and man-made disasters in Europe and elsewhere” (“EU Civil Protection Mechanism”). Any country in the world can ask for the assistance of this institution and it has all 28 Member States participating to help. Since 2015 the Mechanism has been mainly helping the Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia and Greece because of the enormous inflow of refugees. Refugees are mostly taken care of by the European Commission but the European Parliament is also key to adopting the laws affecting refugees.

#### - The UN and UNHCR -

Compared to the EU, the United Nations is a much larger organization with 193 Member States. Its main organs are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. Each facet gives countries a forum to express and debate their worldviews and hopefully end up with resolution of a relevant issue or dispute. The main goals of the United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health

emergencies, gender equality, governance and food production (“About the UN”). Just like the EU, the UN has several funds, programs, specialized agencies and other entities that make up the entirety of the UN. The programs in the UN system are extremely unique because the funds and programs are “financed through voluntary rather than assessed contributors” and the specialized agencies “are independent international organizations funded by both voluntary and assessed contributions” (“Funds, Programmes, Specialized Agencies and Others”). The contributors include the well-known institutions such as the World Health Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, United Nation’s Children’s Fund and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The UNHCR is focused specifically towards helping refugees around the world to either return home or resettle in another country. Since the start of the UNHCR in 1950, it has been at the forefront of helping refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, stateless people and asylum-seekers. The UNHCR falls under the governance of the UN’s General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The High Commissioner is in charge of running the UNHCR and reports to ECOSOC and the General Assembly and is also appointed by the General Assembly. As of 2003 the General Assembly protracted the UNHCR’s mandate to not only help these displaced people and refugees, but to help “until the refugee problem is solved” (“History of the UNHCR”).

The UNHCR only started out with 34 employees to help with millions of refugees after WWII, today it has over 9,300 employees that are working with over \$7 million to help 46.3 million people that are of concern to the agency

(“History of UNHCR”). In 2015 the UNHCR estimated that there are 15.1 million refugees, which is the highest number of refugees in 20 years. The UNHCR has had consistent accomplishments and continues to help millions every year as refugee crises continue to be on the rise.

- UN and EU Refugee Policies -

The UN policies on refugees started with the 1951 Convention of the UN and their Status of Refugees, as mentioned earlier. This was the first policy on refugees and definitely the most important. The UNHCR not only created a definition for refugees and how to help them, but it included strategies on how other states will protect refugees:

“Promoting accession to, and the implementation of, refugee conventions and laws; ensuring that refugees are treated in accordance with international recognized legal standards; ensuring that refugees are granted asylum and are not forcibly returned to the countries from which they have fled; promoting appropriate procedures to determine whether or not a person is a refugee according to the 1951 Convention definition and/or to other definitions found in regional conventions; and seeking durable solutions for refugees.” (“The 1951 Convention” 1)

Most of the UNHCR’s key policies started in the 1990s with policies on refugee women and children and protecting all refugees against harmful traditional practices. A climate change and natural disasters policy just recently came into effect in 2009 talking about how “the process of climate change – and the multiple natural disasters it will engender – will in all certainty add to the

scale and complexity of human mobility and displacement” (UNHCR 1). This has been a big step to talk about the reality of climate change and how it’s impacting refugees; it’s been estimated that in 2008, 20 million people have become displaced or become refugees because of an incident caused by climate change (UNHCR 3). Policies on based on equality such as refugee age, gender and diversity also became a major topic in 2011, and in 2014 the UNHCR proposed a policy on alternatives to refugee camps to provide more protection and assistance in a more organized and safe environment.

While the UN has built the foundation of refugee policies, the EU implemented and complied with all these policies while adding their own. The EU also uses the 1951 Convention as a stepping-stone for their other policies, much like the UN and adheres to the international human rights laws, also known as the International Bill of Human Rights. The UN defines the Bill as the “basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all human being should enjoy.” As the EU was set up, their Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) also stipulated that the Union will have a common asylum policy between the Member States and that these policies are “in accordance with the Refugee Convention and other relevant treaties” (Elspeth GUILD 6) like the African Convention on Human and People’s Rights, the African Convention on Refugees, and the American Convention on Human Rights.

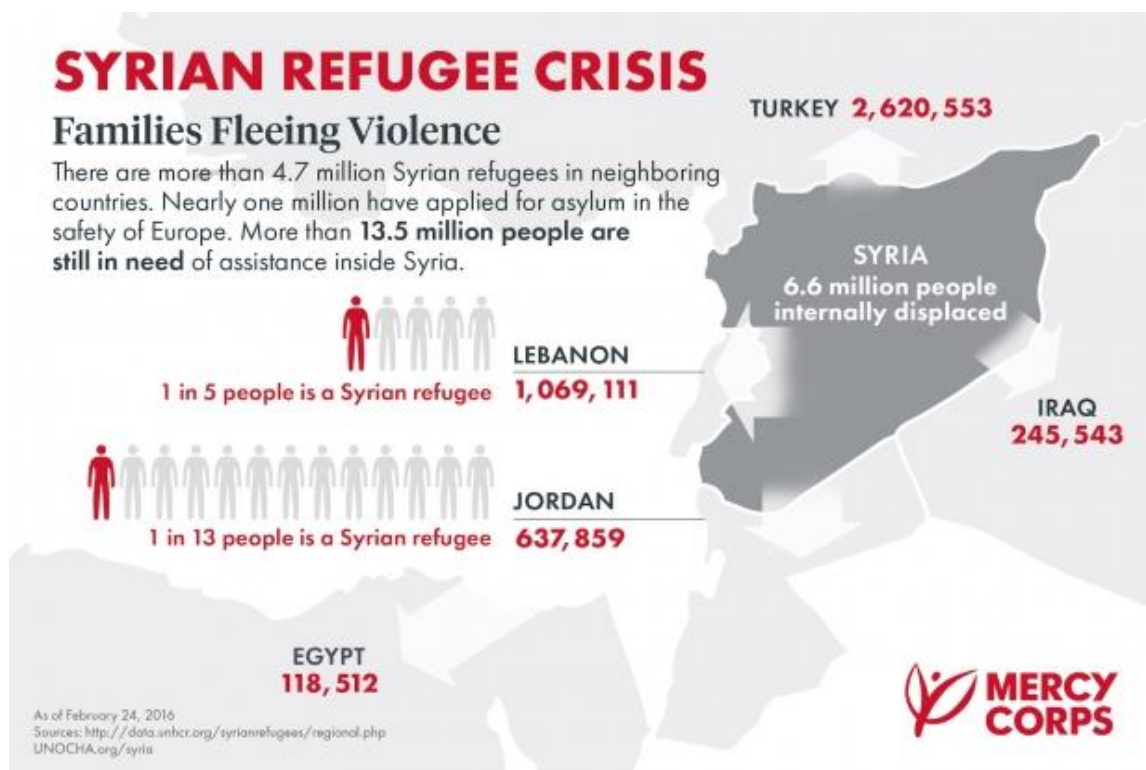
In 1999 the EU and UNHCR worked on collaborating on a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) that is supposed to “guarantee a minimum level of international protection in all Member States” (Elspeth GUILD 5). There

are some major flaws with this plan, however, as it is almost impossible for refugees to access it because there is no legal route available to them. In addition, most EU borders have had mass amounts of human rights violations and “some Member States at those borders have developed a series of measures to try to reduce the numbers crossing irregularly” (Breen 21). The plan is also advocating for a ‘safe third country’ in which refugees will transition through before they reach the EU. Historically refugees don’t make it past these crossing countries which is what the EU is hoping for.

Back in 2009 the EU decided to create a Joint EU Resettlement Programme to “expand EU resettlement of refugees and humanitarian entrants, already determined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to be in genuine need of international protection” (Brolan 248). Canada, Australia, and the United States are the usual places that refugees resettle in, but the EU wanted to let more people resettle in their Member States – although states can still opt out – and the EU would give them significant financial aid if they decide to participate. This program, even 11 years in, was expected to fail because “the persistent inequality of the asylum burden is bad news for the sustainability of the common asylum policy” (Toshkov and Hann 681). Western Europe often takes refugees however Central and Eastern Europe have been lagging behind. Many states on the Mediterranean have accepted too many refugees which has posed undue burden on their support systems.

Some of the critical issues that EU policies are directly impacting surround the Syrian refugees. The map below shows the most recent 2016 numbers of Syrian refugees and how many people still need a new home because they cannot

go back to their own. Both the CEAS and the Joint EU Resettlement Programme have been set up to withstand a normal refugee issue, but they are very unprepared for the magnitude of the refugee crisis that came from Syria and the rest of the Arab Spring uprisings. Since these programs have not been able to hold up in reality, the EU has to rely on the UN to help patch up their work.



Map on the refugee crisis in the Middle East. Table from Mercy Corps.

The UN's procedures have had to significantly change since their original Status of Refugees policy. After it developed base guidelines its policies have since been modernized to adjust to new and ever-changing world issues. One noticeable difference with the UNHCR's policies is that there seems to be more of them in the last few years than ever before. This could be because of the EU pushing for better policies that will protect its own interests. Before 2007 there were policies only every couple of years, but since 2007 when there started to be

political unrest around EU's bordering Middle Eastern countries, there have been *seven* major policies added to the UNHCR's already long list. The key UNHCR policies actually didn't start until the 1990s, right when the European Union officially came together.

Since the EU became official in 1993, it has had many policies regarding refugees which have continued to increase as time goes on. The EU had a major crisis in 1999 when it had 480,000 asylum applicants however this number eventually trended down until about 2005, when numbers started rising and continue to rise to this day (Toshkov & Haan 667). For comparison, the lowest number of asylum applicants was 257,000 in 2005 and in 2010 it had risen to 372,000. The only other time that Europe received refugees from around its borders was after the fall of Communism when "the War in Yugoslavia that followed the collapse of Communism reflected broader political changes and created the largest flows of population into Western Europe since World War II" (Juss 759). This was part of the reason all of these new policies went into action; before, the EU wasn't prepared for refugees because it was just an economic institution and the three major treaties that made up the EU (the Single European Act of 1986, the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997) "had no countervailing humanitarian provisions in them" and therefore weren't ready for an influx of refugees across their borders. Today the EU's new policies and systems still aren't ready for incoming refugees.

Historically the UN and EU had many similar policies regarding refugees however all of this changed with the recent humanitarian crises. The original

guidelines had not been updated for almost sixty years which has resulted in new tension between the two entities.

The main problems between the UNHCR and the EU are in the gaps between their policies; the biggest gap is between the UNHCR's policies "on 'accelerated procedures' and 'safe third countries,' and the EU standards in the procedures directive as these mechanisms translate the control rationale underlying the border and migration policies" (Elspeth GUILD 4-5). The UNHCR has much higher standards for states and the EU isn't giving the proper attention to this increasingly difficult issue.

Another major difference between the EU and UN highlights the ways they interact with the EU's Common European Asylum System, which the EU decided to start on its own. Although the UN didn't help them start this process, the UNHCR fully supports this effort to protect refugees throughout the EU. However, the UNHCR also realizes that the EU's system has not been all that effective and "protection rates for the same groups of asylum-seekers vary considerably from one Member State to another" ("UNHCR and the European Union" 5). An example the UNHCR gives is that in 2008, Somali refugees had a protection rate that ranged from 4% to 93%. Most EU countries also don't have the same material conditions across the board and Member States are not willing to make the significant legislative improvements that the European Commission wants because they are afraid of the additional costs (5). Since the CEAS isn't going as planned, the next step for the EU will be to rely on the UN for support. This is another example of how the EU leverages its power within the UN to create outcomes that benefit their Member States.



Compared to the EU, the UN also has its fair amount of problems with policies. One of the problems with the UN's policies is that states have to accede to the entire policy and can't 'adopt reservations' and decide to not uphold aspects of the UN's rules. The UN cannot force a state to accept these policies so it's easy for any state to dismiss them. This goes for any policy at the United Nations though because everything is voluntary; if a country disobeys a law, it will have to go to the International Court of Justice however there is no forceful way to make a country or person pay for what they did because the UN believes in resolving matters peacefully.

One of the main differences between the UN and EU is that the EU has more control over its Member States because they are all tied together economically and politically. The UN does not have this kind of power and can only rely on the cooperation and kindness of states. There are some states and institutions that seem to prey upon the UN's resources when their own don't suffice. The EU is one of these institutions because although the institution of the EU doesn't have any voting power itself in the UN, it has 28 Member States to sway votes. While the EU only has 16% of the world's refugee populations ("UNHCR and the European Union" 9), it is having the full attention of the UNHCR while the Syria refugee crises is going on. Meanwhile, there are millions of refugees in adjacent states of Syria (as can be seen in the figure above). Now that the EU's policies are not going as planned, it will turn to the UN's resources to help turn the tides in their favor.

- UN Interactions with International Institutions –

International institutions have been working with the United Nations since the beginning. At the 1951 Convention, which created the Status of Refugees and confirmed the creation of the UNHCR, there were a number of international institutions there such as the League of Red Cross Societies, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, among many other non-governmental organizations that were "granted consultative status" during the conference ("The 1951 Convention" 7). Although there were no refugee organizations at the time (because 'refugee' was not an official international term yet), international refugee organizations are now the main bodies who support and help the issue. If the 1951 Convention knew what its impact would be in the future, it would have taken into consideration letting institutions have more voting or speaking power for the millions that they would be caring for.

During the 1951 Convention these non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were only there as consultants and had no voting powers within the UN. If they wanted, they could, "under the rules of procedure adopted by the Conference, the right to submit written or oral statements to the Conference" (8). These were the only rights that NGOs and other international institutions were given, but they did not have much input in what refugees needed or how to protect them, even though these organization had been taking care of most of the injured and displaced before WWII. For example, the League of Red Cross Societies (now known as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) started after WWI when there was such a need for caring for

the wounded and displaced that many Red Cross Societies banded together to combat this issue. Also at this time the YWCA had been working since 1885 to care and house young women in England and abroad and they were at the forefront of helping after the refugee crisis began in WWII.

Today not much is different; international institutions have sprung up everywhere to help refugees and they are sometimes the main providers of lasting help in areas that the UN and EU are lacking in. In 1945 there were no refugee organizations to help with the millions of refugees from WWII but today there are too many to count. Some of the most impactful are Oxfam, Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, Mercy Corps and the International Red Cross (Goyette) among dozens of others. Some organizations patrol the Mediterranean with rescue boats to save any lost migrants, some build schools in countries like Turkey and provide elementary education to Syrian refugees and some give direct aid to refugees like food, clothing, water and medical assistance. International organizations are still doing a majority of the work while getting no power in major institutions like the United Nations.

As part of the 1951 Convention and the Status of Refugees, Article 22 states, “the Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nations with respect to elementary education” (24). Most “contracting states” have not held up their side of the convention to help educate the incoming refugee children. Instead, international organizations have to make up for the overwhelmed and under-resourced states like the ones in the European Union. One of these organizations is the Karam Foundation (Goyette), which is a charity that targets fundraising to rebuild schools in Syria and creates more

educational opportunities to the mass of Syrian child refugees. States in Europe might not have expected a mass of refugees, but they are now still responsible for them. If the EU doesn't provide the necessary services, like education, now then it will have many more problems as time progresses. It's worth it to invest in refugee children because they will become the next generation of defining a country – either they can be nationalized and taken into the state's society or they will become another sizable minority that will have resentment for the state they live in.

Another area that contracting states are failing refugees is healthcare. The Status of Refugees document does not help much in this area and with little foundation, it lets contracting states do the bare minimum. Article 23 of the Status of Refugees only mentions, “the Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as it is accorded to their nationals” (24-25). This is one area where it seems like there is endless outside help from organizations because governments are not willing to spend money on healthcare for refugees. There are so many organizations like Medical Teams International, Doctors without Borders and International Medical Corps. The resources for these organizations are stretched as they work all over the world where governments can't cope with their own crises – from Ebola and the zika virus, to everyday healthcare – and it's finally time that governments step up and stop letting international institutions step in where they are lacking.

Power within the United Nations isn't equal. Throughout the UN committees the Member States that are a part of the most powerful ones, like the Security Council, have many European states for permanent members. The United Nations Security Council has five permanent members and the United Kingdom and France are two of the five. This means that 40% of the most powerful votes will also support the opinions of the European Union; the United States is also on the committee and is also an ally of many EU states, so it could be said that 60% of the votes are in support of the EU's opinions.

Within the UN's other committees, power is also spread unevenly. The Member States with the most power are usually "first-world" countries that are not developing states and have money to spend on funding the UN and its institutions. Most of these powerful Member States end up being from the European Union because of their status as a "first-world" country. Not only does the EU have strength in status and wealth, but it also has strength and safety in numbers. With 28 Member States pushing for the interests of the EU, the EU has more power than any other group within the UN. Most states are not grouped together in such a productive and stabilizing system and therefore don't have as much power as the EU within the UN committees.

Not only are other states at a disadvantage, but other helpful international institutions are also powerless when compared against the EU. Since the EU is an international institution made up of Member States, it has both the freedom of an international institution and the power of 28 governments. With 28 votes in UN committees as an institution, the EU is far in front of other institutions that get no votes in the UN. Institutions are merely allowed to watch and give their

opinions now and again, but the real power lies with the states and, in this case, with the group formation of the European states.

Other international institutions that work with the UN are not as lucky as the EU; they don't have Member States in the UN that can vote for their policies nor do they have the resources to start policies such as the EU's CEAS. The EU, however, gets as much power as it wants (up to 28 voting Member States' worth) while it is not nearly effective as other international institutions working with refugees. While the EU Member States are supposed to take care of the refugees that are arriving, this burden is now falling to international institutions as the EU was (and is) unprepared.

International institutions should have more power because they do most of the work when governments can't take care of their own citizens. Many international institutions, like NGOs, are taking over where governments are lacking, but governments are still getting all the power to make decisions. The EU especially has the best position because not only does it have the most power in the UN to help its own Member States' refugee issues, but the governments of the Member States can count on that other institutions can take over for them where their own institution's policies are lacking.

#### - Conclusion -

The United Nations deals with regional and international organizations with regards to policies for refugees on a constant basis. Not only is the UN partnered with several international institutions such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Organization for Migration,

but it also has stronger relationships with organizations like the European Union. The latter seems to have more control over UNHCR policies than other international organizations. The European Union has significant power within the UN because although it is an international institution (which has no power in the UN), it has 28 Member States that push its interests within the UN. The EU yields significant power not only due to the sizable number of members but also its economic prosperity. Having this power in the UN, the EU is able to advance its interests, especially with the refugee crisis.

My original hypothesis was corroborated by the evidence provided in this thesis; the European Union has significant influence in the United Nations, more powerful than other international institutions and, when the EU members joined it gained more control than most UN Member States. The last time there was such a severe refugee crisis - like the current one faced with Syrian refugees - Europe was the one who was producing the refugees, and the newly-formed United Nations along with other international institutions were there to help. Today, even though Europe is now a united, powerful entity, it is still seeking enormous help from the UN and other international institutions and is taking full advantage over using its power in the UN to support its own interest when its own policies fall short. Some scholars even argue that the EU's "paralysis over the question of a common asylum system may represent the most severe failure in the project's history" (bin Talal 78). In these upcoming years it will be crucial for the EU to start relying less on the already overworked NGOs and the UN.

Soon the EU will not be able to support its already crumbling refugee system. In 2015 a study said that "more than 800,000 refugees and migrants

have arrived to the continent by sea and this figure is expected to exceed one million by early 2016” (bin Talal, 78). The EU is now leaning on the United Nations and other international institutions to help with this crisis, but even with their help it is too major of an issue to combat. There are several ways that the EU can start to stand on its own two feet, and this mainly has to do with restructuring its policies around refugee asylum and aid.

Before the EU asks for any more help from the UN or other international organizations, it needs to reevaluate its budget for refugee assistance. The European Commission has stated that have given over 5 billion Euro (Syria Crisis 1) however the EU’s overall budget is over 142 Euro a year (European Commission 1). This means that only 3.5% of the EU’s budget is focused on the Syrian crisis which is not aligned with the current needs, “the magnitude of humanitarian needs is overwhelming” (Syria Crisis 2). The European Union needs to both put more money into its refugee programs like the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) *and* they should be using its money more wisely. At this point, the EU needs to reevaluate all of its refugee policies and look at what works and what is not working. The EU should also “divert some of the spending on ‘hard’ security (such as border enforcement) to support innovative and more sustainable forms of refugee assistance” (bin Talal 79). Most spending is going towards border security instead of integrating and settling refugees.

More than this, the European Union could be the first to create partnerships between “international donors, refugees, host states and the private sector” (bin Talal 79). By connecting ‘host’ states (or states that are hosting refugees) together, the EU could “address phenomena such as aid dependency



and host state fatigue, and steer international refugee policy towards more sustainable and mutually beneficial initiatives” (80). The refugees from Syria need somewhere to go and the countries around them are already overcrowded with refugees and so they now fall onto the European states for support. The refugee crisis affects all of the European Union because either refugees are at the borders of their country, or refugees are applying for asylum. It’s time for the EU to start spending more than 3.5% of their budget on an issue that affects its entire entity and is undermining unity.

Although this refugee crisis has become central in the news with regard to how it’s affecting Europe, of all the “18 million refugees and the 27 million [internationally displaced people] in the world, 80% are located not in Europe, but in poor countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America” (Bundy 6). It is only getting more attention now because it’s affecting powerful states in the European Union. The states around Syria have taken in more displaced citizens than any other European country, however there is still more publicity around the EU because it cannot decide on a solution. This is just another example of how the EU is extremely powerful; issues like refugees weren’t as important before they came to first world countries and now they are the sole crisis that the UN is putting all its efforts towards.

Hopefully in the next few years the EU will be able to implement policies that will relieve the stress resulting from the refugee crisis and other international intuitions will get the well-deserved break that they need. The European Union needs to change by assessing its budget for refugees, opening its borders and dispersing refugees equally throughout the European Union, and

partnering with 'host' states. Changes like these will assist the EU and alleviate its own hardships, set up the means to create relationships with host states when there is a refugee crisis, help refugees become adjusted in stable country, and ease the pressure put on the UNHCR and other international institutions. The EU needs to start utilizing its power and influence in the UN to not only better the institution, but also help other states and international organizations that share the same interests otherwise it will significantly undermine humanitarian efforts.

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